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Amendment Reduces Spending on Musicians, Instruments, and Performances by \$120 Million in FY12

Washington, DC – Today, the House of Representatives passed Congresswoman Betty McCollum's (MN-04) amendment (#153) to reduce the Department of Defense's spending on military musical bands by \$120 million. Adopted as part of the fiscal year 2012 defense authorization bill (H.R. 1540), this amendment will cap Pentagon spending on military bands at \$200 million. In Fiscal Year 2011, the Department of Defense estimates will spend \$320 million on its music programs.

"There's no question that we need to get America's budget under control. The question is how," said Congresswoman McCollum. "Families and communities across this country are being asked to make incredible sacrifices in the name of fiscal responsibility. It's time to ask the Pentagon to make a small sacrifice in their own musical budget. Military bands have an important place in our nation's history, but in a fiscal crisis, \$200 million should be enough to continue that tradition."

The Army currently has over 100 bands employing 4,600 full-time professional musicians and support staff. The National Guard, Air Force, and Navy also have dozens of bands with full-time musicians. Over the years, the number of bands and their cost to taxpayers has continued to grow, in part because Congress conducts no oversight over this portion of the budget. According to one senior defense analyst cited in a May 18, 2011 article in The Hill, the Pentagon could spend as much as \$50 billion on military bands over the next 50 years.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum serves on the House Appropriations and Budget Committees.

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